

AMERICA AS A BUSINESS CIVILIZATION 050:281

American Studies Department

Marian Z. Stern

Fall Semester 2006 – First Half

Thursdays: 5:35 pm – 8:35 pm, Hickman, 214

Office Hours: 4:00 pm - 5:20 pm each Thursday (in the American Studies Office) or by appointment

Communication: m.stern@projectsinknowledge.com

Messages also may be left for me in the American Studies Department (732-932-9174)

Required Reading: Colossus by Jack Beatty – packet to be distributed at the first class

Additional packet materials – to be distributed at the first class

Week 1 October 26, 2006

Topic: Historical Overview of American Business: The Puritans to Enron.

Readings: Colossus How the Corporation Changed America, pp. xiii-xxii, 3-44, 59-64, 89-119, 129-140, 263-269, 375-382.

Please note: these readings should be completed before the final exam.

Week 2 November 2, 2006

Topic: “Go West Young Man” The historical and cultural roots of American entrepreneurship.

Readings from packet materials: Benjamin Franklin “The Way to Wealth”, Bloomberg by Bloomberg, “The Big Picture” from Giants of Enterprise, “America’s Growing Affinity for Risk” from The Christian Science Monitor

Week 3 November 9, 2006

Topic: Business and Democracy: friends or foes?

Readings: Colossus pp. 141-176, 290-298. From the packet: Monopolies in America, Robber Barons Saints or Sinners, and “Gates gets slammed” from Time Magazine.

Week 4 November 16, 2006

Topic: “The Business of America is Business” Vs. “What Price Success?”
The American definition of success and resulting disillusionment.

Readings: Colossus pp. 279-289, 319-354.

Week 5 November 21, 2006

Tuesday Night!

Class Cancelled

Week 6 November 30, 2006

Term Paper Due!

Topic: Business and Society - The role of business in hindering or promoting social change

Readings: Colossus pp. 65-81, 429-466, “Women’s Pay Gap and Choice” from The Christian Science Monitor, “50 Most Powerful Women” from Fortune Magazine

Week 7 December 7, 2006

Topic: What is Corporate Social Responsibility and is it an Oxymoron?

Readings: Colossus pp. 355-371, 383-407, and 467-484; “Fallen Idols” from The Economist and web sites from several corporations (to be distributed in class)

Grading: Attendance will be taken at each class and class participation will count for 25% of your final grade.

A final exam will count for 40% of your grade. This is scheduled for December 20, at 8:00 am

A term paper is due on November 30 and will count for 35% of your grade.

There is a choice for your paper topic:

a) Read one or more of the novels and/or non-fiction works listed below and compare the theme of the work(s) with themes discussed in class and the assigned readings. Pay particular attention to such topics as entrepreneurship, democracy, social stratification/mobility, personal sacrifices, and ethics.

Reading choices: Barbarians at the Gate (non-fiction), Liar's Poker (non-fiction), The Rise of Silas Lapham, Babbitt, "Death of a Salesman" (play) and Tearing Down the Walls (non-fiction). All of these books are readily available at local bookstores, on-line, and in at least one of the university libraries. (If you want a copy of the book delivered to the Douglass library, if not already there, use the "delivery/recall" button in IRIS.)

YOU MUST LET ME KNOW YOUR BOOK SELECTION BY NOVEMBER 16 AT THE LATEST.

b) Take on the persona of an American businessperson, living today, in the past, or future, and write a diary of your experiences over the period of six months. You should have at least twelve entries which cover the following topics and themes: type of business and how you developed it; past and current challenges; impact of your business on your personal life and family; **economic, social and cultural conditions in the United States during the time period you have chosen that impact your business**; your ethical (or lack of) ethical standards; your past and present role models; composition of your work force and why you hired certain individuals or types, etc.